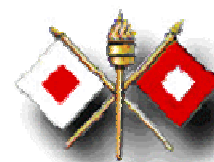


The Desert Voice

13—19 September 2004



Commander's Corner

TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO DANGER - Greetings again! It has been another good week here in Iraq. The weather has remained cooler, around 100 degrees, and everyone is enjoying it! We only hope it will stay that way.

Also we all would like to send our thoughts and prayers out to all of the families that were affected by hurricane Ivan. I know all of the Alabama soldiers have been extremely concerned for their families and friends back home. They were glued to the internet and news to try to get the latest information from the hurricane. They maintained their professionalism and continued on with the mission but you could tell that their hearts were focused at home. I think by now most have talked to their loved ones and have gained some peace of mind again.

This week I would like to highlight some people that have become lifelines for the 121st Signal Task Force. These lifelines are our contractors. Just as with most corporations, there is someone or some company you call for advanced technical support in certain areas. Well, we are no different. Our contractors are the experts in their field and have deployed here with us to ensure that we maintain the best communication support possible to the Task Force. Our contracts range from MSE support to advanced automation support. They are great and we truly appreciate their support to us here in Iraq. We couldn't do it without them. So, in no particular order, we extend our heartfelt thanks to: Tom Liddy – General Dynamics

John Williams – CECOM LAR

Rick Taylor – Info Assurance Manager

Derick Dulkoski – Segovia Technician

Hal Johnson - General Dynamics

Brad Adams – General Dynamics

"Super" Dave Nadwodny – Info Assurance

Robert Martinez – Info Assurance

Tim Lowrie—General Dynamics

Mark Mondello – Info Assurance

Marvin Carter – Exchange Administrator

Chris Roe – Data Path, DKET Operator

Chris Roos – data Path, DKET Operator



Tom Liddy, General Dynamics contractor, out at one of our SEN Sites

CSM Butler and his wrecking crew (combat patrol members) assisted by SSG Newton from A/115th Sig deserve a special thanks for completing the newest facility on FOB Danger. We will certainly put it to good use in the coming months.



Until next week, please continue to send your support to the soldiers and contractors over here. They are doing an outstanding job!! We are holding strong through the third quarter. Remember us in your thoughts and prayers, it truly does make a difference.

ISSUE #32

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Rick Taylor and Chris Roe

HHC, 121st Signal Battalion

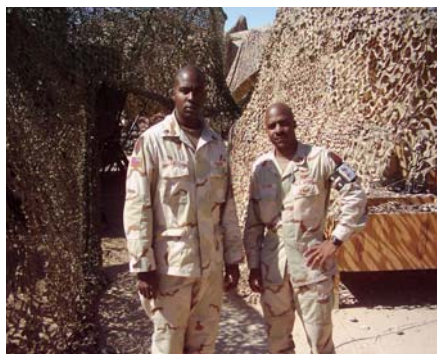
Hello again everybody. I can see from the weatherman that we are the only still in the 100's on a daily basis. That is okay since, at night it gets down to 78 lately. Yes, that is still warm but it feels cool to us.

This week we promoted SPC Growden to SGT Growden. Here he is giving his acceptance speech.



Starting this week we will be doing special editions for awhile. Each section writes up their specialties, accomplishments, job descriptions and responsibilities. This weeks edition comes from EMS (Electronics Maintenance Section).

Hello everyone! I am CW2 Gilyard entrusted with a platoon of maintenance technicians that are responsible for ensuring the MSE equipment in the 121st Signal Battalion for war fighter is operational. That may sound like an easy task, but when you peek behind the scenes and catch a glimpse of all that must happen in order to be prepared to



answer the call of duty anytime, anywhere every time, then you will have a greater appreciation for what a maintenance element has to offer.

In order for the battalion and our customers to continue to receive the quality service that they currently enjoy, every piece of the EMS puzzle is needed to create the perfect picture. It all begins with the head. I'm blessed to have a seasoned senior non-commissioned officer – SFC Aaron Smith, Jr. as my second in charge. He is one of which I can communicate the vision and intent of the battalion, regardless of the situation (real world and garrison) and has the ability to formulate a plan of action that encompasses the greatest of detail before, during and after the mission. It is said that senior non-commissioned officers hold a great responsibility in mentoring and teaching the younger, lesser-experienced officers that they may work for and NCOs under his tutelage. Well, I can attest to that, this being my first platoon as a Warrant and this being his sixth platoon as a Platoon Sergeant! Another asset of SFC Smith that is not to be overlooked is his resourcefulness. EMS lives in a world of "figure it out and get it fixed right now!" That is understandable, because the war fighter's lives are on the line. So, when an assemblage breaks down, we have scratch, scrape, beg, borrow and/or steal, in conjunction with mobilizing personnel to the site or getting on the phone with the team to pinpoint the source of trouble and getting it back up. High stress you say? Not always, because we ensure that all of our soldiers are thoroughly trained and very knowledgeable in their specific area of emphasis. Let's my platoon!

EMS consists of 5 MOSs: 31Fs, 31Ps, 35Es, 92As, 35Js, and 31Fs.



Because of the greater demand on our larger switches throughout the battalion, the 31Fs have to be quick troubleshooters and thoroughly skilled in both aspects of their job: operating and maintaining the Node Centers and both Large and Small Extension Nodes. If there were anyone in the battalion that you would want to be a Subject Matter Expert (SME) – it would be these guys! This section includes: SGT Jamaal Jackson, SPC Neal Roberts, SPC Peter Gainesan, and SPC Thomas Cicci. Because of their vast requirements of our field and the ever changing demands for better, more efficient communication means, our 31Fs are often called to venture out of the scope of their MOS training to creatively adapt and overcome obstacles to do just that. If I had to name an MVP for this section – it would have to Co-MVPs: SPC Neal Roberts for the work, fabrications and modifications that we are using today and SPC Thomas Cicci for single-handedly providing EMS support in the absence of his team members SGT Matleski (31P) and PFC Mathias (injured). To the both of you, thanks for your will-

ingness to answer the call of duty and uphold the EMS tradition of quality service.



31Ps - - are not typically highlighted for the success of their efforts in maintaining our Line-Of-Sight assemblages, because they are used in conjunction with a switch. But when the shot is out and the switch team cries that there is nothing wrong, then our LOS team (SGT Tyler Growden, SGT Jon Matelski, SPC Stacy Starr, SPC Adam Snider, SPC John Houtman) saddle up and darts into action. Like the 31Fs, the 31Ps must also have a thorough knowledge of the inner workings of their assemblages to quickly isolate the troubled area. Unlike the 31Fs, the 31Ps have radios to swap, thus making their job a little easier, but nonetheless essential. But as history will tell, swapping radios is not always the answer and that is when all of their training and vast knowledge comes into play! If I had to name an MVP to-date in this section, it would very difficult to delineate between the skills, knowledge and expertise between all of our 31Ps, but SPC Starr appears to have the leading edge (that is until the rest of them demand a re-count!) SPC Starr (aka - that older guy) thanks for your leadership and a job well done!

35E - COMSEC Radio Repairer - consist of SGT Thomas Kent, SGT Derrick Wilson, SPC Andy Alba, PFC Brandon McCleary & PFC Christopher Mathias. Let me first start by

saying that whatever they teach these guys in AIT, it has to be comedy based! Every Echo that reports for duty is locked and loaded with jokes, cracks and smart remarks. So, needless to say, 92.65% of our comic relief comes from this section! This section's mission is no less important! To become an Echo, you must first obtain a clearance (you know an examination of your life that stems back to the second that you are out of the womb!) Because of the nature of their job, the jobs that they qualify for and the security that rest upon them, secure communication relied upon in a mission such as this would cease to exist.

Although the MSE arena is slightly different from the Ordnance maintenance structure, their focal points within MSE are both the Local and Remote Access Units (LRAU & RAU) and COMSEC radios. As for MVP here, SFC Smith and I are both impressed with the job performance and leadership potential demonstrated by SPC Alba. Yes, there are others in the section that are making things happen: SGT Kent managing his maintenance team and making things happen on FOB Speicher for us and SGT Wilson training and supporting customers here on FOB Danger, but SPC Alba (Triple A - Andy Able Alba) has proven to us that he has the ability to hold his own and make things happen in the 35E realm. Thanks Alba!



92As - Automated Logistics Specialist - The Production Control section is the heartbeat of the platoon. The soldiers of this section (SGT Lonnie Dunbar, SPC (P) Wyleska



Velez, SPC Devon Evans (35E), SPC Fraya Harris, PFC Narciso Rivas, SGT Garth)

manages the flow of work in and out of the platoon, ensuring that is accounted for and returned to its owner in a timely manner. They are responsible for coordinating, forwarding, tracking and return for all equipment that must be sent outside of the battalion for repair. They are also responsible for the accountability, issuing and replenishing of at least \$2.5 million in replaceable parts. The MVP to-date would go SPC(P) Velez for her ability to oversee, train and maintain every aspect of the Production Control section. As a whole, they may never receive credit for directly repairing or restoring communications to our customers, but they are definitely key in ensuring that our technicians have what they need - when they need it! One last thing for this section - we were all crowned aunts and uncles again due to SPC Lopez (rear detachment) giving birth to Master Christian!!! Congratulations!!!

35Js - Automations Repairer-Well, it is unfortunate that the duties of this section are not clearly defined, but the knowledge and expertise of computers - the life line of the Army - demonstrated by SSG Javier Perez, SPC Fraya Harris and SPC Jason Marquis have kept us up and running. Although all of them are currently cross training in other MOSs, when called to fulfill automation needs, consider it done! SSG Perez (the NCOIC) of this section was trained and has served as Shop Foreman. SPC Harris has crossed trained as a 92A and is currently running PC operations on the night shift. SPC Marquis (our utility fielder) has

been cross training as a 31F and is currently serving as a M249 gunner on our HHC convoy patrol team.

Due to taskings and our obligation to support every aspect of the battalion and our company, I would be remised if I did not recognize the members of our Platoon that are not currently working with us, but are still apart of our team. The first is SSG Javier Perez - the battalion convoy patrol (Danger Express) NCOIC. His job is to train and ensure that each member of his team can effectively use their assigned weapon and execute combat patrol tactics in order to provide evasive actions and/or protection when LTC Garrison or CSM Butler goes outside the FOB. Also called to serve outside of her MOS is SGT Theresa Garth. She currently serving in the Coulter's Place - an Internet Café dedicated in the memory of CW2 Coulter (124th Sig. Bn, 4ID) here on FOB Danger, thus ensures the effective and efficient use of the computers and phones for the boosting of morale for the troops.

Special Acknowledgements - EMS wouldn't be as effective as we

are without our General Dynamics (GD) and CECOM teammates. I can not begin to tell you all how valuable they are to us and the sense of comfort that we have during this mission in knowing that there are some "actual" SMEs here on our. Chris Cadorette (CECOM - recently redeployed), Tom Liddy (GD) and John Williams (CECOM) - Thank you for your unyielding support and your willingness

As you have heard some months ago, EMS suffered a great setback in having to send PFC Christopher Mathias for treatment at Walter Reed Medical Facility to for injuries sustained in a vehicle accident. Chris, you are in our prayers and we wish you a full, speedy recovery!!!

Upon our return, EMS will undergo some leadership changes. SFC Smith should be preparing to PCS and I would like to, in advance, recognize SFC Tufele as EMS's next platoon daddy (as the soldier say it). SFC Tufele is the smallest Samoan that we have ever seen, but he still comes with that same renowned EMS 'bulldog' tenacity.

Finally, as the year winds down, our minds are beginning to transition back to Germany and/or visiting family. We are beginning to feel the downward momentum of redeployment and the urge to document memoirs is intensifying. As a result, coming to a Media Player near you (only available through EMS personnel) is a mini movie directed and produced by Get Booted Productions; a collaboration by SGT Derrick Wilson and SPC Stacy Starr (WILSTARR Pictures) - ***The Twisted Bunch Pt.1***. Let me tell you, I was privileged to attend the premier and you will not be disappointed! Bert & Ernie says, "It really explain how "Effective Work leaves time for Play!" See it for yourself!!!

Thanks to my Commander, CPT Steyer, for allowing me the opportunity to present to some and introduce to others what is arguably one of the key pillars in the success of the 121st Signal Battalion - The EMS Platoon "Twisted". I am Chief Gilyard signing off - and remember as always ~ ***Proud To Serve!!!***

In last week's edition of the Desert



Pictured are members of EMS platoon located FOB Danger. L-R (kneeling) CW2 Gilyard, SPC (P) Velez, PFC Summerall, SGT Growden, SPC Starr. L-R (standing) SPC Evans, SSG Perez, PFC Harris, SPC Alba, PFC Rivas, SFC Smith and SPC Snider. Not pictured: SGT Wilson (photographer), SGT Dunbar, SPC Roberts, PFC McCleary, SFC Tufele, SPC Marquis and SPC Gainesan.

A Company, 121st Signal Battalion

Voice I wrote about the possibility of cooler temperatures. Much to my pleasant surprise, this week the high temperature for the day did in fact dip below the century mark. However, much to my chagrin, the 5 day outlook has the temperature climbing back above the century mark. It was a nice respite while it lasted, but alas, we will soon be back to the Iraqi heat we have come to love so much.

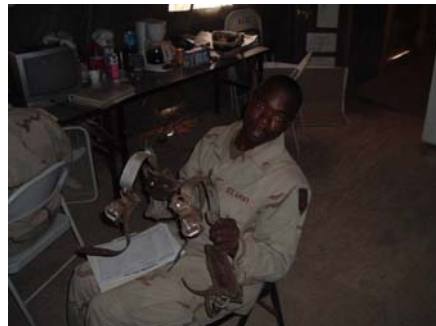
This week FOB Speicher has been busy focusing on change of command inventories. This is a special time in the life of the company when we get to verify that every hammer, screwdriver, camouflage screen, and vehicle is accounted for. Soldiers, who have had trouble sleeping due to the excitement, wake up early in the morning eager to lay out their tool boxes and make sure everything, down to the tiniest allen wrench is accounted for so the incoming commander can verify it. These truly are the special moments.



SSG Johnson, SFC Sadler and SSG Porter display camouflage for CPT Bratton (tall guy 2nd from the left)



SGT Page ensures everything is out of the CONEX



PFC Clark checking all the parts and pieces of his toolbox

There was trouble on the island of FOB McKenzie this week and SGT Snider was voted off during tribal counsel on Sunday evening. I contacted the F14 tribe to ask what the reasons were and as usual they were very tight lipped about the whole situation. SGT Snider has ended up at FOB Danger with the F13 tribe and is taking the helm as leader while SGT Hubbard is enjoying some well deserved R&R. Only time will tell how the new tribe will react to SGT Snider's leadership. We'll be watching closely and keeping you updated.

The mouse that has accompa-

nied the Remote RAU 50 team through thick and thin, Minnie, passed away this past week in her cage at FOB Brassfield-Mora. Minnie, who was known for several weeks as Mickey before it was discovered she was a female, was given full military honors as she was laid to rest for her permanent dirt nap. The funeral was held on the 16th of September 2004 and the funeral was attended by such prominent statesmen as SPC Cruz, PFC Collantes, SPC Hypolite, and SPC Quiroz. Minnie was buried under the name Mickey, since that is the name she was known by for most of her life. It is not believed she was survived by any family. While a sad passing, Minnie's absence is not expected to have a long term impact on the performance of the team.



Minnie, a.k.a. Mickey's grave at Brassfield-Mora

In sports news this week Alpha Company continued to show domination over not only other Army units, but other countries as well. SFC Branyan beat the Indian National Ping Pong team, posing as KBR dining facility employees, for the title of Ping Pong Master of FOB Remagen. SFC Branyan was the only American in the competition, so the win was not only for Alpha Company, it was for America. Also this week, SSG(P) Jones won his second consecutive Punt, Pass and Kick competition on FOB Remagen. After a short rest he also took the

title of Dominoes Grand Champion for the month of September.

Right now is the time to come visit. There is simply too much fun going on for us to keep it to our-

selves. And as I said last week, you can be an integral part of the team by helping to display the equipment for inventory. You'll have stories to share about your experience for years to come. The price of admis-

sion is simply a bag of ice, which we really need because the temperature is climbing again. Wish you were here. XOXOXOXO

B Company, 121st Signal Battalion

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!!! Well another week has passed again, with relative peacefulness. It was one of the weeks that we really like to have here, nice and quiet. Once again rapper 50 Cent will be making this weeks issue, he stopped by LSA Anaconda to do a free concert for the soldiers there. And we were luck enough to have some of our soldiers in attendance. They had just returned from R&R and got a little bonus by seeing the concert.



SGT Bryan and SPC Burns enjoy the show



50 Cent entertaining the soldiers

We here at Warhorse also had some celebrity visitors from the World Freedom Tour Entertainers. WE had Rob Dibble and Diamond Dallas Page. Rob Dibble was a former pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds,

that retired from baseball in 1995 and has been working with ESPN. Diamond Dallas Page or "DDP" as he was referred to, is a former professional wrestler that wrestled in both the WCW and WWF.



Rob Dibble, SPC Edmonds, and DDP



Rob Dibble, SPC Yarley, and DDP



Rob Dibble, PFC Eaton, and DDP

Also I wanted to let all of the families know that we able to begin conducting VTCs to the rear. We were successful in testing our equipment today with a short VTC to the Rear-D folks. Right now we are trying to schedule the VTC for 26 September from 1730 to 2000(Germany time). Please get with SSG Schmidt if you are interested.

On a serious note, please keep the families of some of our National Guard soldiers in your thoughts and prayers. There are a lot of families that just suffered through Hurricane Ivan, when it Alabama and Florida, and worked its way north. Being deployed from your family is hard enough, and worrying about a hurricane is the last thing that some soldiers need to worry about.

Well that is about it from here this week. Like I said it was a nice quiet week for us. Thanks again for all that you are doing, every little thing helps. Please keep up the good work, and take care of yourselves and each other. Have a great week.



That camera is way too close

C Company, 121st Signal Battalion

Another week has come and gone, and another chance is upon us to share all of the things that the soldiers of Charlie Rock were up to this week. First off, not enough can be said about the break in the heat that came this week. Dipping below 100 for the daytime high was wonderful, but lows in the morning of the upper 60s was a blessing. Cooler air to do PT, more of a chance to see the sunrise with the later times, and even some soldiers breaking out the long sleeve t-shirts was a change of pace we all are enjoying. Of course, as I look at the 5-day forecast, it will be over 100 again for the next few days, but the recent memory of the cool air is enough to get us all through this last month of heat.

In the continuing effort to train for every scenario, we conducted Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) training this week. Rotating through three stations, the soldiers' received refresher training on detecting chemical agents in the area, proper care and maintenance of the protective mask, and proper ways to decontaminate if an agent is present in the area. It was a great chance to pull the equipment out of the bag, ensure it still works, and train up on those quick nine seconds allowed to make a seal on the mask.



SPC James Bowser and SPC Patrick Edwards work to get their mask to seal in nine seconds.

This week, we received a gift in the mail. One of my friends has an

internet wholesale business as well as being a Mary Kay representative, and generously donated a mirror to the company. This mirror is a symbol of freedom, as it has an eagle across the top of it and the flag across the bottom. She asked for a picture of some female soldiers to share the story of women doing well in combat here in Iraq, and I wanted to share it with all of you also.



SPC Cindy West, SPC Melissa Jimenez, CPT Dawn Longwill and SPC Christian Palmer pose with the donated Freedom Mirror.

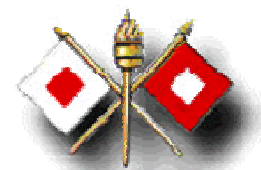
The R&R program continues to provide the opportunity for our soldiers to get home to see friends and family. Everyone is returning with a renewed readiness to complete our mission here, and more are on the way home next week. We will continue to have slots into DEC, so if you haven't seen your loved one yet, please be patient. Everyone who has been here since we deployed will be home very soon.

Finally, I want to share a ceremony and some thoughts. Our soldier's had the opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of those that lost their lives on 9-11-01 as well as honor all of those that are fighting the global war on terrorism. Members of Charlie Rock stood in the ranks in front of BG Morgan, Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver on 11SEP04 as the honor platoon, representing all of the soldiers



SPC Nichelina Almiro, SPC Cindy West, PFC Elizabeth Shifflet and many others comprised the honor platoon for the Patriot's Day Ceremony on 11SEP04.

of the 1st Infantry Division. It was a very moving tribute, and BG Morgan explained well the definition of a patriot. All of your soldiers fighting and communicating here in Iraq are PARTIOTS, defenders of freedom and a better way of life. They are the pride of America, and performing their job exceptionally well every day. I once heard someone say that they were worried about the youth of America and how they are turning out. I can tell you first hand that the youth of America are performing their mission every day in new ways to ensure the warfighters on the ground can communicate. Eighteen and nineteen year olds are on my convoy team, driving on dangerous highways and leading the charge on a .50 caliber machine gun as we complete our mission around the Area of Operations. They are America's next generation, and they fill us with a hope that things will always be better for those to come. You all have so many reasons to be proud of your soldiers. Until next week – **ROCK STEADY!**



A Company, 115th Signal Battalion

September 11 has come and gone, but did not go unrecognized by the soldiers on the ground in Iraq. In a place where most will agree that every day seems the same, 9/11 was the exception.

Alpha Company of the 115th Signal Battalion stood, as many around the world, in remembrance of the victims and those since who have "fought the good fight." At FOB Danger and at FOB Omaha soldiers of the 115th took part in ceremonies commemorating 9/11.

Here at Danger, 2nd Lt. Chris Carnley led the honor platoon, comprised of 115th, 711th and 1st ID soldiers, for the 1st Infantry Division. The same day at Omaha, SPC Terry Pounders of the SR 30 team served as a member of the color guard for the 1/18th Infantry ceremony. He was presented with a coin from SGM Pallister of the 1/18th for his contribution.

Thursday, the Brotherhood Training Academy graduated another class. Alpha Company's own CSM Jearl Brooks serves as training Command Sergeant Major at the school, where the new Iraqi National Guard troops learn basic soldiering skills. Thursday's graduation events were the second such ceremony for the Brotherhood Training Academy.

On another note, Alpha Company is proud to welcome PFC Howard Staggs. He is the 115th's newest addition to the company's motor pool. Arriving 7 days ago, PFC Staggs is already settled and on the job here at FOB Danger. At home in Alabama, he is an auto mechanic. PFC Staggs completed AIT after the 115th had mobilized in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

This week, our thoughts and prayers are back in Alabama with the victims of Hurricane Ivan. Although

Alpha Company's home in Florence, AL experienced only rainy and windy weather from the storm...most of us have friends or family in the path of the storm's rage. We indeed remain ever vigilant to our signal mission here in the Middle East, but our hearts will always be in Alabama.

17 September 2004

SPC Sonya Harris



CSM Jearl Brooks pictured here with SGT Joel Elston at the Brotherhood Training Academy graduation.



2nd LT Chris Carnley of Alpha Company heads the honor platoon at the Patriot Day Ceremony here at FOB Danger.



PFC Howard Staggs, the newest addition to Alpha Company here in Iraq.



SPC Terry Pounders of SR 30, presented this week with a coin by the 1/18th Infantry.

C Company, 711th Signal Battalion

Hello family and friends! I hope this newsletter finds you well after surviving Hurricane Ivan. It was a stressful time here in Iraq, watching the weather channels and not being with our families. We were all a bit frustrated, but our thoughts and prayers were with you.



We were glued to internet pictures!



SSG D'Andrea, SFC Freeman and Bodiford watching Ivan on the internet.

Now that the worst has past, it will be rough not being there to help clean up. I often heard the statement, without us, the National Guard, who will help police up? Company C, 711 Signal Battalion has always been a big part of post hurricane/storm duty and we all wish we were there now!

To keep busy and help time to pass, our soldiers decided to take on another building project. To start things off, SGT Adams came into my tent, declaring SFC Bodiford was the enemy and saying he was entitled to a Purple Heart award. It

seems that while cutting 2x4s, SFC Bodiford cut more than just wood. SGT Adams thumb got in the way!



SGT Adams with wounded thumb

He took a hit to the top middle of his thumb and now he is milking it for all its worth. Sorry SGT Adams. SFC Bodiford may be dangerous with a skill saw, but he is NOT the enemy. Nice try!



SFC Freeman hammering



SSG D'Andrea measuring

In other good news, the weather has definitely turned cooler and it feels great! If it could just stay this way. Some of us had the pleasure of attending a 1st ID memorial ceremony for the victims of Sep 11 as well as fallen comrades in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This reef

was placed at the Division HQ in remembrance of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



SFC Freeman was honored to lead the platoon that represented all soldiers in Task Force Danger during the ceremony. He, SSG D'Andrea, SGT Davis and SGT Patterson participated from our group and they did an outstanding job.



Honor Platoon and Honor Guard

Well, in closing I'd like to say – HANG IN THERE! I know its tough on everybody, but we've made it this far so we can make it to the end. Your strength and perseverance is what helps get us through the day. Take care and God Bless.

B Company, 125th Signal Battalion

This week has NOT been another week of serious Anti Iraqi Forces Activity throughout the country. In the At Tamin province alone we have had numerous attacks against coalition forces. The good news is that our soldiers continue to do their jobs without hesitation. We have had a busy week. We traveled to over half of our outlying forward operating bases, we received a new platoon leader, we conducted inventories of equipment across the company, and we began operation 'Spring Cleaning'. Rest and Recreation slots finally look solid enough to guarantee almost 100% of all soldiers will get a two week break. We have begun planning for our redeployment home.

This week we received a new asset to the company. 1LT Matt Haynes arrived and took over our Node Center 63 Platoon. Matt's wife is named Heley and he graduated from James Madison University in 2002. (yes, that makes me feel old) Matt spent the last 8 months serving as a platoon leader with the best Infantry Battalion in the Brigade Combat Team, the 1-14 Infantry 'Golden Dragons'. He is very experienced and has seen combat on the Syrian Border and in the embattled city of An Najaf. He has only been here a week and I already appreciate the amount of work and effort he puts forth. He and his wife will both be great assets to the 'Hele On' company.



NC63's new PL - 1LT Matt Haynes

Matt's arrival and some equipment upgrades drove us to travel to the far reaches of our Area of Operations. We made visits to G33 (SGT Rickard) who support 1-27 Infantry near the city of Hawijah, and we visited Forward Operating Base Gains Mills, home of Super Radio Access Unit, SR63B (currently led by SSG Defonte). These teams both live in our most active sector of enemy activity but both are doing well and making the communications mission happen.

We made a stop at the Civil Military Operations Center in Kirkuk. Civil Military Operations Centers are the link between the civilian populations and the military forces that are here to help. They conduct vital operations that are critical to the success of our operations here. The team supporting them is Super Radio Access Unit, SR63B. The team is led by SGT Williamson and after only working at the CMOC for a month is considered vital to the success of the mission in Iraq.



Sufi Muslim Security Guard at the Civil Military Operations Center

1LT Haynes, PFC Peabody, and SPC Duran also made a helicopter flight out to our most remote sight, Forward Operating Base Kalsu. They visited small extension node G42 (SSG Vankampen), conducted inventories and some equipment upgrades. It was 1LT Haynes first visit to the 'retirement home' and he was impressed by the professionalism and independence SSG Vankampen's team.



SPC Peabody - flying out to do something cool like Electronic Maintenance

Overall, a quick week with a lot of traveling! All of the sites we visited are being maintained and operated by young groups of volunteer soldiers who continue to do outstanding work in the support of their Nation. Hele On!



SGT Macias - founder of Iraqi Save a Bird Foundation - Notice Bird on Antenna above him



Apache Escort

B Company, 279th Signal Battalion

Co. B, 279th embarked upon range operations at the CMAT ranges at FOB Caldwell on 13 – 14 September. The range utilized for the training was a convoy range also used for crew serve weapons firing. This range gave us the opportunity to not only meet the training opportunity of crew serve weapon qualification, but also presented the opportunity to accomplish a convoy live fire exercise as well. The Range OIC was 1LT Dwight Campbell and the Range Safety Officer was SFC Albert Fowlkes.

The first training objective was the crew serve familiarization fire of a .50 CAL Machine Gun. All crew serve gunners and additional convoy personnel took the opportunity to fire both a .50 CAL recently acquired from the 105th ENG BN as additional combat power for our convoy missions. Each firer got 100 .50 CAL rounds and had the opportunity to fire at long range silhouettes and a bunker at the back of the range. The .50 CAL was mounted on our M1114 ring mount and each gunner got the opportunity to get the feel for

firing from the vehicle in a stationary position.

The second training objective was to qualify crew serve M249 gunners and offer an opportunity for familiarization firing for other convoy team



members. It was the goal of this training not only to qualify current M249 gunners, but also give other personnel involved in convoys the opportunity to fire the M249 for familiarization in the event it became necessary for them to man the weapon during an encounter with enemy activity.

The training was performed in three phases. First the gunners fired

at down range targets with the M249s on tripods, second they fired from the pedestal mounts in two of our vehicles, and finally they moved down the convoy range route in a patrol of two vehicles with a Driver, TC, Safety, and Gunner and performed a convoy live fire exercise engaging down range targets while moving at a nominal speed. Overall it proved to be fun and effective training for the soldiers.

The final training objective for the two day range event was small arms qualification. Each soldier got the opportunity with 18 rounds to zero their M16A2 and qualify on a MOD C target attempting to hit at least 26 out of 40. All in all the training was a great success and the soldiers were glad just to have something to break up the monotony of the day to day activities. Based upon the great success of the training it was decided that this would be a monthly activity for increased familiarization and moral among the soldiers at all levels.

Chaplain

Second Chances...Everybody Needs Them. Police stopped a teen-age girl in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, after complaints that a car had been seen going around her neighborhood in reverse for some time. The girl told police that her parents had let her use the car, but she had put too much mileage on it. "I was just trying to unwind some of it," she said.

If we thought really hard, each of us could think of a time in our lives when we needed a second chance. It may have been that you struck out in Little League Baseball and needed another at-bat to redeem

yourself or maybe you flunked a test in school and needed a better grade on your final to pass. Perhaps the second chance you needed was more serious because of a moral failure or a betrayal. Whatever the circumstances, you've needed a second chance and often you've gotten it. However, we've all felt the sting of needing a second chance from someone who refuses to give it. When this happens, we are almost always held in debt to that person.

But there is One who never fails to offer second chances for us who need them. He is, in fact, the God of the second Chance. Throughout the

Bible, we read about how Israel, God's chosen people, turned away from Him over and over and over again. And each time they did, they found themselves in difficulties beyond their control. That is, after all, the result of turning from God to our own desires. But, as often as Israel turned away, God was there offering them yet another opportunity, a "second chance," to come back and follow Him and enjoy His blessings.

Remember that your true second chances come from God and, when asked, He never holds you in debt. He forgives and forgets...and blesses.